

Building Health and Human Services in South King County

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



A Business Plan for Our Community
2000 - 2002

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A Business Plan for our Community 2001-2002

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BUILDING HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES IN SOUTH KING COUNTY: A BUSINESS PLAN FOR OUR COMMUNITY, 2001-2002

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

South King County is a growing, vibrant community with more than 620,000 residents. The region includes sixteen suburban cities as well as unincorporated areas. South King County is home to many families and has 107,000 students enrolled in nine School Districts. Population trends in the region include:

- Significant growth
- Large immigrant and refugee population
- Increasing ethnic and cultural diversity
- Low-income families are moving from other areas of the county to find affordable housing in South King County
- Increasing senior citizen population

As a healthy, growing community, South King County is planning for the future. This plan is designed to identify specific ways that all sectors of the community – individual businesses, local chambers of commerce, non-profit providers, government, and private foundations – can work together to assure that South King County continues to be a place where individuals and families can thrive.

The Plan's Purpose and Scope

This plan is the result of strong collaborative efforts of non-profit human services providers, United Way of King County, local governments, King County, and businesses working together. The purpose of the plan is to provide a tool for the community to use for the next two years to continue to strengthen health and human services resources in South King County. It is designed to provide specific steps that the community can take to move forward to enhance and expand services to our region's residents. We have chosen a two-year timeframe in order to provide immediate results for which we will be held accountable. Resources developed during the two years will enable us to be successful long term. At the end of two years, the plan will be evaluated and revised.

In 1999, human services providers, local cities, King County Community Services Division and United Way of King County came together to develop a plan addressing human services needs in South King County. The project was first discussed with the South King County Human Services Planners group. A subcommittee was established and human services agency representatives from the South King Council of Human Services were asked to participate. Initially, the scope of the plan was to develop a needs assessment for the subregion, as part of King County's overall planning process. As work progressed, the vision quickly broadened to creating a plan that could be actively used to enhance and expand health and human services

in South King County, and increase involvement of all sectors of the community – private and public. The group identified expected outcomes and goals as described below.

Expected Outcomes and Goals of this Plan

Outcomes:

- Increase involvement and understanding throughout the community of key issues and strategies to build stronger health, human services and housing capacity in South King County.
- Increase human services funding in South King County from both private and public sectors.

Goals:

- Obtain agreement from human services funders, service providers, businesses, churches and other members of the community to collectively focus resources on key issues identified in the plan.
- Fund at least one collaborative project that addresses findings and implements strategies identified in the plan.

How the Plan was Developed and Information Sources Used

The group began by identifying information that was already available about human services needs and community assets, and what information still needed to be collected. More information was needed regarding immigrant and refugee communities, minority communities, seniors, people with disabilities, and youth. Focus groups and interviews were conducted to collect the information from refugee, immigrant and minority groups. A telephone survey was conducted of 400 South King County households, to gather information about community perceptions of human services needs and resources.

In addition to the information collected, the group reviewed numerous reports regarding human services trends and issues. Examples of the reports studied included the United Way of King County Community Needs Assessment, Public Health Seattle & King County reports, needs assessments and plans from local cities, and studies in specific service areas. A list of all reports used is included in the Appendix.

The information was reviewed regarding human services needs in South King County. The group brainstormed a list of needs, issues, and priorities in the region. The list was extensive, including the whole range of human services – health and mental health, family support, youth programs, senior services, affordable housing, emergency and transitional shelter, culturally competent services, employment assistance, and many others. A list of the human services issues and needs discussed is included in the Appendix.

Criteria for Choosing Key Focus Areas

As the list of human service needs and resources developed, it became clear that there were many more opportunities to enhance and expand human services in South King County than the two-year timeframe of the plan allowed. The group was faced with the daunting task of

prioritizing the key focus areas for the plan. The following criteria was developed and applied to each area of need identified. Out of this, the key focus areas emerged. The criteria used were:

1. Will addressing this issue ***benefit all of South King County?***
2. Is there ***community support*** to address this issue?
3. Can ***significant progress*** be made regarding this issue ***within the next two years?***

One underlying assumption in considering key focus areas for this plan was that existing, effective service systems would maintain their current service levels. Identification of a key focus area, therefore does not mean that work is not being done in other areas. Many successful, effective service strategies are currently in place and funders are committed to maintaining service systems that provide critical services. The key focus areas represent possible new directions and initiatives in human services in the South King County subregion.

A draft plan was taken to the South King County Human Services Planners and South King Council of Human Services to obtain comments and suggestions for changes to the business plan.

Goals and Strategies

Five community goals identified by United Way of King County provide the framework for this plan:

- Food to Eat and Roof Overhead
- Supportive Relationships within Families, Neighborhoods and Communities
- A Safe Haven from all Forms of Violence and Abuse
- Health Care to be as Physically and Mentally Fit as Possible
- Education and Job Skills to Lead to an Independent Life

Following is a summary of the five community goals, the key focus areas within each goal area, key findings, objectives and strategies. It is important to note that this should be considered the first phase of an ongoing community action process. These goals and strategies are expected to be addressed within the next two years. At that time, the community needs and resources will be reviewed again, and focus areas for the next few years will emerge.

Community Goal 1 - Food to Eat and a Roof Overhead

Key Issues

There is a gap in food bank capacity. Data indicates that the use of food banks is increasing despite the "strong" economy. Services to meet this demand are not present.

Food bank service delivery is inconsistent and spotty in much of South King County, especially for the homeless.

Proposal

OUTCOME: Increase the uniformity in quality and quantity of food bank services throughout all of South King County.

Suggested Strategies:

- Develop a working group to draft a standard of practice to be adopted by all local area food banks.
- Ensure through the standard of practice, that local food banks try to incorporate the many different cultures into food bank services.
- Obtain a food bank coordinator position for the South King County Food Bank Coalition to lead administration and fundraising.
- Conduct fundraising operations such as capital campaigns, etc.
- Advocacy through educating the community as to who uses food banks, sensitivity to dietary needs, etc.

Community Goal 2 – Supportive Relationships Within Families, Neighborhoods and Communities

Key Issue

There is a lack of quality, affordable, accessible child care in South King County that is also culturally relevant (especially for infants).

Proposal

OUTCOME: Increase the availability of quality, affordable, accessible child care.

Suggested Strategies:

- Sponsor a South King County Child Care Forum with participation by employers, government, nonprofits, funders and providers.
- Provide businesses with information regarding the benefits of onsite childcare.
- Form a partnership with Child Care Resources.
- Form a South King County Child Care Coalition.
- Involve community colleges.
- Sponsor a forum for providers on quality issues.
- Examine the Bellevue/Redmond model.

- Encourage nonprofits which provide child care to open facilities in South King County especially those providing school age and infant care.
- Encourage cities and county to encourage large apartment complexes to include child care facilities.
- Work through the South King County Child Care Forum to advocate with State and Federal legislators to require childcare licensing.

Community Goal 3 - A Safe Haven From All Forms of Violence and Abuse

Key Issues

Domestic violence is a significant problem in South King County with limited local resources to address it.

Proposal

OUTCOME: Increase domestic violence victim services in the South King County

Suggested Strategies:

- Increase funding to domestic violence services in the South King County.
- Seek non-government funding sources to contribute to domestic violence services in South King County.
- Implement a coordinated domestic violence subregional planning process in South King County.
- Establish a team approach to domestic violence prosecution in South King County.
- Approach existing domestic violence victim services agencies about their desire/capacity to expand to South King County.
- Examine effective models in other cities.
- Assist cities in establishing or maintaining domestic violence task forces.
- Reconvene the South King County domestic violence meetings of service providers, planners and other stakeholders.
- Advocate with legislators for increased funding for services.
- Support the ongoing Domestic Violence/Child Protective Services Collaboration Project.
- Provide cell phones, portable alarms and panic buttons to victims.
- Bring cultural aspects into domestic violence materials.

OUTCOME: Improve criminal justice response to domestic violence.

Suggested Strategies:

- Advocate within the legal system to move to prosecution without the victim's presence.
- Ensure that all South King County police departments have reporting forms that adequately cover domestic violence.
- Assist criminal justice staff in securing training specific to domestic violence cases.
- Participate in new King County domestic violence fatality review panel.

Community Goal 4 – Health Care to be as Physically and Mentally Fit as Possible

Key Issues

The demand for Mental Health services in South King County is increasing.

Access to Mental Health Services is a problem due to transportation difficulties, insurance limitations, lack of familiarity with mental illness, and lack of understanding about what the mental health system is in South King County.

Mental health services are not always well integrated and the continuum of services is not always used.

Professionals and families involved in mental health services need more information.

Proposal

Outcome: Increase access to mental health services for South King County residents.

Suggested Strategies:

- Start a mental health task force in South King County. This task force should bring advocates and support systems to the table at all levels—planning, policy making, information sharing, and individual treatment planning
- Publicize warning signs of depression (particularly in children) and where to get help. Among the populations targeted should be school officials, teachers, and all professionals who deal with children. Examples of media that could be utilized are: city newsletters, utility bill inserts and billboards.
- Develop a public awareness campaign with South King County media to provide information about mental illness and how to access services.
- Arrange for the South King Council of Human Services to host a meeting of mental health providers, advocates and other interested stakeholders.
- Provide educational materials and referral information to sites where people in need of services can access the information: including private doctors, emergency rooms, health clinics, etc.
- Advocate for the equitable distribution of state, county, and private funding for South King County.
- Develop a position paper in support of greater expenditure for mental health services in South King County.

Community Goal 5 - Education and Job Skills to Lead to an Independent Life

Key Issues

The demand for English as a Second-Language (ESL) services in South King County is increasing. Many of the 5,000 refugees who come to Washington each year settle in South King County because they cannot find affordable housing in Seattle or the Eastside.

There is a great need for immediate and culturally relevant ESL services for immigrants as soon as they arrive. In order for ESL learners to lead an independent life, they must be able to read, write, and speak English well enough to maintain gainful employment and earn a livable wage.

Proposal

OUTCOME: Increase basic ESL skills.

Suggested Strategies:

- Evaluate existing programs.
- Coordinate with ESL providers.
- Make ESL learning more accessible at churches, workplaces, non-profit agencies and places where the ESL population congregates.
- Build stronger relationships with the ethnic communities and develop partnerships out of those relationships.
- Support the growing number of cultural services and ESL centers in South King County by attracting more funding and volunteers.
- Advocate for more flexible hours for the ESL community college programs.
- Provide more basic ESL classes in the community.
- Examine ESL system currently in place.
- Collaborate on how programs are being administered to children.
- Develop standardized ESL curriculum and teach it in the school classrooms.
- Provide support for families raising bicultural and bilingual children.

OUTCOME: Increase individual employability and job readiness for ESL learners.

Suggested Strategies:

- Conduct job readiness workshops that include job search assistance, application/resume preparation, interviewing techniques, and opportunities for on-the-job training, summer employment, temporary employment, and full-time employment.
- Provide instruction in survival English for job placement and/or training.
- Establish apprenticeship and mentoring models for use in the business environment.
- Support education for employers that promotes the increased hiring and retention of ESL employees.
- Find additional funding for job-site education.
- Promote entrepreneurial training.
- Work with Employment Security.
- Provide more extensive training for Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Community Service Offices.